

By H. G. ALLCARD, F.R.E.S.* and
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As early as the last week in February we planned a two-week holiday in the Canary Islands for the last week of August and the first of September. This time we left together from Manchester on the morning of the 23rd August. At 8.40 we were already in the air and at 13.15 we landed at Los Rodeo airport in Tenerife where we intended to spend our holiday and observe the insect fauna.

We stayed at the same hotel as in 1977 because it was easier for us to visit the wooded mountains in the north of the island. By 2.15 we were in the hotel at Santa Cruz, and while enjoying a cup of tea on the lawn of the hotel and drawing up the programme for the next day, we noticed a slow moving shadow on the turf, and looking up saw the first butterfly which happened to be *Danaus plexippus* (L.). It was flying in the direction of the huge African Tulip Tree (*Spathodea campanulata*) which was covered with beautiful, red flowers and adorned a section of the hotel gardens. Not much later, we also saw another butterfly, this time the African migrant *Catopsila florella* Fab., sipping the flowers of the bougainvillea. Later in the afternoon we visited the nearby park and there, on almost every Cassia bush, we saw several empty cases of pupae of this butterfly on the defoliated branches. This butterfly was first recorded in Tenerife in November of 1966 with the introduction of a species of Cassia from Ethiopia, and since then it has settled also in the Gran Canaria and La Palma. It gives several broods and it is interesting to note that the female may be whitish or yellowish. In Tenerife, wherever there is a Cassia, one may find the eggs or the larva quite easily.

Later in the evening we had a call from our friend Señor Morales, who told us that the Director of the Natural History Museum, Dr. Josef M. Fernandez was seriously ill and that there was no hope of seeing him again at the Museum, in fact at 8.30 a.m. of the following day, we had a telephone call and he informed us that Dr. Fernandez passed away during the night. This was not at all good news, as we were always welcomed at his office whenever we called.

Friday the 24th. We tried to visit Monte de las Mercedes 900m. and some 20 km. away, the habitat of the endemic and most beautiful butterfly *Gonepteryx cleobule* Huebner, but as we overpassed the old city of La Laguna and were half way up the mountain, we noticed, as in 1977, that clouds were moving in and very soon we found ourselves enveloped in thick mist. Thus we had to go back and try another locality. We decided to take the road which leads to Teide the highest mountain in the island which is about 12,000ft high, and reaching a height of about 2000m, we found ourselves

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above the clouds in bright sunshine surrounded by the greenery of *Pinus insignis* and *P. canariensis*. It was very hot and being somewhat thirsty we walked to the popular fountain but hardly had we turned on the tap than hundreds of bees and wasps, coming as if from nowhere, swarmed to the flowing water which made it impossible for us to open our mouths unless we risked swallowing a couple of these stinging insects! In 1977, this locality was the best place for the other endemic butterfly *Pseudotergumia wyssii* Christ., but this time only two worn females were seen. On the bushes we noticed a good number of the lycaenid *Cyclorius webbianus* Brullé, and now and again, *Colias crocea* Fourc. crossed the road at a reasonable speed, but no more butterflies were seen that day.

Saturday the 25th. We took the coach to Puerto de la Cruz some 38 km. away, as the mountains were still covered by clouds. It was an enjoyable drive, as one could admire the ever changing views of the countryside and the sea, and the extensive plantations of banana trees, especially in the valley of Orotava. It soon became cloudy when we reached our destination. We walked towards Taoro Park, passing by so many villas with the front gardens nicely planted with all sorts of flowering bushes and climbers. *Danaus plexippus* was flying slowly from garden to garden as if choosing the best flower to get the best drink. Projecting from the railings of one of these gardens, we noticed the flowers of the milkweed (*Asclepias curassavica*) and strange enough, we counted nine larvae of different sizes feeding lavishly on the leaves and dropping their excreta on the pavement. Further on, flying a few centimetres above the ground on some rubbish dumped in a secluded corner, we noticed several restless *Ziziera knysna* Trimen flying from one place to another as if they were after a mate. When we reached the park we just stared at each other! What a change! What was an attraction to so many insects is now a parking place, and several pitches for different kinds of sport; but still the flowering climbers of bougainvillea and plantago which cover the wire-netting of the tennis courts, and the bushes of the lantana and hibiscus along the pathways still attract a few butterflies; in fact we saw odd specimens of *C. florella*, *P. rapae*, *P. daplidice*, *L. phlaeas*, *A. cramer* and *D. plexippus*. The micros *Hymemima recurvalis* Fab. and *Duponchelia fovealis* Zeller were very common on the lantana. The huge fly *Promachus vexator* Beck (Diptera: Asiliidae) was seen resting on dry branches. Very few butterflies were seen this time and only one species of hymenoptera – *Bombus terrestris canariensis*. As regards other insects, the grasshoppers *Aiolopus strepens* (Latr.) and *Acrotylus patruelis* (H.-S.) could not be missed.

We wondered why *P. cheiranthi* Huebner was so rare on this occasion and after some time looking for eggs on Nasturtium – (*Tropaeolum majus*) we still could not find any.

Sunday the 26th. A sunny day with a clear sky. We left the hotel at 10.30 a.m. and drove to Monte de las Mercedes. One could see La Palma in the distance. As the day got warmer the beautiful *G. cleobule* Huebner started to fly about, resting now and again on the flowers of the endemic *Cedronella canariensis* and on those

of *Rubus ulmifolius* Schott. As this mountain is one mass of *Rhamnus glandulosa*, the foodplants of this species, this is the best habitat. Other species seen that day were *C. crocea*, *P. rapae*, *P. xiphioides*, *L. phlaeas* and *C. webbianus*. The micros *Agriphila trabeatellus canariensis* Rebel and *Uresiphita polygonalis* Hubn. were quite common. Other common insects were *Bombus terrestris canariensis* and the Sand Wasp, *Podalonia tydei* Guill. (Hym. Sphecidae); whilst the former was after the flowers available, the latter, in various sizes, was hopping or walking on the bare ground looking for its prey. Flying at a reasonable height, we also came across the small endemic long-horn beetle, *Leptura palmi* (Col. Cerambycidae).

Monday the 27th. The weather kept fine so we visited another locality north of the Las Mercedes, Las Carboneros. As we arrived there close to noon, the sun was fairly hot though at an altitude of 800 m. and the butterflies seemed quite thirsty as they tried to visit every flower that came their way, especially *Cedronella* and *Hypericum*. Again *G. cleobule* was seen quite often especially females. *P. xiphioides* was emerging and perfect males flew about short distances to return to the same place as we walked on. Here we came across *Maniola jurtina fortunata* Alph., all females which had already passed their best and a single *Lampides boeticus*., also, a female *C. webbianus* patronised certain bushes and *C. crocea* and *P. rapae* kept flying from one direction to another always at a good speed. At 16.00 we returned to the hotel.

Tuesday the 28th. Prof. J. Bacallado of the University of La Laguna took us for a drive to different localities. The first stop was at Lagunetas 1400 m.: unfortunately it was very windy there and no butterflies were on the wing except odd specimens of *C. webbianus* in a cosy spot. We noticed a few species of Orthoptera: *Mantis religiosa* L., *Oedalus decorus* (Germ.), *A. strepens* (Latr.) and *Calliptamus plebeius* (Walk.). The next visit was to Cumbe de Arafo 1700 m. We could hardly recognise the locality, as a wide road had been constructed since our last visit in 1977 through a good part of it, which when visited then produced a lot of wild flowers and plenty of Lycaenids. This time there were more grasshoppers about than butterflies. We saw only a couple of *A. cramera* (Ersch.) and a few *L. phlaeas*. Missing were the endemic beetle *Heterger transversus* Brullé, and the large earwig *Annisolatus maxima* Brullé. As we were close to the fountain we visited on the 24th, we tried to have another look for *P. wyssii* but not a single specimen was seen; however, the bees and the wasps were still there waiting for somebody to open the tap!

Wednesday the 29th. Though the mountains were clear, a strong fresh breeze was blowing making it difficult for the butterflies to fly. We tried a further locality on the other side of Pico del Inglis, but only fresh *P. xiphioides*, *C. crocea* and *P. rapae* were flying, all close to the ground. At a point, we saw a donkey on a long lead grazing; as soon as he saw us he sniffed heavily making a queer sound and all of a sudden a boy came out from a nearby cave and seeing two men he retired. We went back not to disturb the donkey.

After half-an-hour we returned to the same place and again as the donkey saw us he emitted the same noise; the boy looked out and went in again. This time we proceeded as we had to take that way; in the meantime a car appeared coming from behind and as soon as the donkey saw it he lustily brayed a cacophonous serenade. This time the boy jumped out and ran down the blind corner of the road. We noticed later that a cow was grazing down the road and the boy ran out to drive her aside . . . an excellent watch-dog of a donkey, and a clever one too, using two different codes to give the alarm!

Thursday the 30th. Cloudy and windy; we stayed at Santa Cruz and in the afternoon visited the Museum of Natural History, where we were shown a few butterflies, which a member of an expedition patronised by the Museum to Cape Verde Islands that month had brought back with him; these included *Danaus chrysippus* L. and the form *alcippus*, *Hypolimnna misippus* male and female, *V. cardui*, *L. boeticus* and *Papilio demodocus* (one fresh and two worn).

Friday the 31st. We wanted to spend at least two days on the nearby island of Gomera, but unfortunately the only hotel at San Sebastian was all booked up, so the only alternative, was to go there for the day. This was somewhat risky, as so much depended on the weather. It was a tiresome venture too, as we had to get up at least at 6.00 a.m., take a light breakfast in our rooms, hire a taxi to drive us to the coach terminus to catch the 7.30 a.m. coach to Los Cristianos, a distance of 74 km. and take the 9.00 a.m. ferry-boat to San Sebastian, Gomera. The coach journey down south took over one hour and as all this area is very arid there was little to see of interest. We reached San Sebastian just after 11 a.m. The first thing was to hire a taxi and luckily enough, the driver understood quickly the purpose of our mission when we mentioned to him "El Cedro". The first impressions one forms of this island is a mass of high, barren mountain, but on penetrating further inland, one discovers that it is an island of contrast with varied relief and deep ravines. The drive up to El Cedro took us over 1½ hrs, going up and down along the only winding and narrow bends and tunnels. All the way the sky was overcast and we had little hope of seeing any insect on the wing; however, by 13.30, the clouds drifted away and the sun cheered us up. It was quite hot at 14.00. On the favourite flowers of the Cedronella, *G. cleobule* and *P. xiphioides* were enjoying a drink. We came across very few insects; *Bombus terrestris* was very common on the ubiquitous *Rubus ulmifolius* as well as *Cerceris concinna* Brulle; *Podalonia tydei* was seen several times. At 16.30 we had to leave El Cedro to be in time for the return ferry-trip at 18.00. By 20.30 we were back at Santa Cruz de Tenerife, tired but looking forward to a good dinner and a long rest.

Saturday the 1st September, turned out to be an exceptionally nice day. We were accompanied by Señor M. Morales and his son who is studying botany. The mountains were very clear, so we had an 8 km. walk from Monte de las Mercedes to Las Yedras and Carboneras, which we did in four hours stopping now and again to

observe the different flora and fauna that we came across. *G. cleobule* was out in great numbers resting on every available flower, mostly on the Cedronella; we counted up to five specimens sipping on a single plant, and one could have taken any by the fingers had one wanted to. *M. jurtina fortunata* was still on the wing but all females and very worn, *P. xiphioides* was on the increase and females started emerging; *C. webbianus* and *C. crocea* were on the move as well. Here, besides the *Bombus*, we came across as singtons several species of hymenoptera, such as *Amegilla quadrifasciata* (Villiers), *Anthidium manicatum* (L.) and *Cerceris concinna* Brullé, all of which were visiting *Mentha pulegium* and in large number, *P. tydei*. The Diptera were represented by the Sirphids *Chrysotoxum triarcuatum* (May) and *Eristalis tenax* L.; the Tachinids by *Pseudogonia fasciata* Wied, *Gonia bimaculata* Wied and other species were *Villa nigrifrons* Macq. (Bombilidae) and *Chrysomyia albifrons* Wied (Calliphoridae). One could not escape the Orthoptera represented by *Aiolopus strepens* (Latr.), *Acrotylus patruelis* (H-S.) and *Ariagona margaritae* Kr. Sunday the 2nd. a day of rest. We had a late breakfast and later a walk down town.

Monday the 3rd. Once more we took the coach to Puerto de la Cruz. We roamed about the beautiful villas admiring the various climbers and bushes which at this time of the year were in full bloom. Aristolochia with flowers as big as a bread plate, Tecomas, Plumbagoes, Bougainvilleas of various shades, Poinsettias, Strelitzia, and Cassia which attracted *D. plexippus* and *C. florella*. However, *P. cheiranthi* was still conspicuous by its absence. We had a drink in the garden of one of the hotels and admired the paradise of flowers, the gigantic Cannas and Asters, the hanging Wisteria and the white flowers of the Datura, the foodplant of *Acherontia atropos*, but no larvae were seen as it was still too early.

Tuesday the 4th. As the day of our departure was getting nearer and nearer we could not resist the temptation to have another go on the mountains. Once more we visited the north side of the Mercedes. It was very hot and unfortunately A. V. forgot his hat at the hotel. There was nothing to do but to tie knots to the corners of the hankerchief and use it as a cap; still that was not enough. The hot rays of the sun forced him to find some shade but the only little space available out of the sun, was that provided by a notice-board which warned the holiday-makers "No tire cerillas, peligro de incendio". Whilst having a rest on a stone which other persons had used as an improvised seat to shelter from the sun, he felt something touching his wet hankerchief. . . believe it or not . . . it was a *G. cleobule* . . . was the the butterfly thirsty or inquisitive? The only butterfly not seen before was *C. crocea* var. *helicina*. Beating the vegetation we disturbed a few micros: *Agriphila trabeatellus canariensis* Rebel, *Pyrausta aurata* Scopoli, *Psara bipunctalis* Fab. and *Endotricha rogenhoferi* Rebel another endemic species.

Wednesday the 5th. . . the last day. As the following day we had to be at the airport by noon, we did not want to miss the last chance

of a clear day. Again we visited a part of the locality we explored on the 1st Sept. with Sēnor Morales. We came across the same species of butterflies but more females of *G. cleobule* were flying slowly in search of flowers. We also came across *L. boeticus*. The endemic long-horn *Leptura palmi* was more common and *P. xiphioides* was at its best. As clouds were moving in we decided to return to the hotel. Thus a restful and enjoyable holiday on the peaceful mountains of Tenerife came to an end, but as usual we had a delay in leaving Tenerife, though by 14.30 we were in the air and after a stop of 45 minutes at Santiago, we reached Manchester at 19.45.

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THE DOTTED RUSTIC: RHYACIA SIMULANS HUFNAGEL IN LONDON — A single specimen of this moth appeared at my trap here on the 30th July 1980. — R. A. SOFTLY, 12, Parliament Court, Parliament Hill, London N.W.3 2TS. [Our correspondent enclosed a coloured photograph of the specimen in question. The species appears to have increased its range in south-east England during the past few years, and we wonder if this is the first record of its occurrence in London. — J. M. C. -H.]